



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name CNA
Address Known to the Royal Commission
Occupation Retired
Date 25th August 2016

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. My full name is CNA and I was born in 1939.
3. In 1974, I was living with my family in Merewether, attending St Joseph's Catholic Church, Merewether (St Joseph's church) and looking after my children who attended St Joseph's Catholic Primary School at The Junction (St Joseph's school) for their primary school education.
4. I remember in 1974 there were two priests at St Joseph's church. Father Patrick COTTER was the Parish Priest and Fr Vincent RYAN was a Curate. Both Fr COTTER and Fr RYAN resided at the presbytery located adjacent to St Joseph's church and St Joseph's school.

Father Vincent RYAN

5. I remember during this time Fr RYAN would often play with all the children who were waiting for buses or parents after school, piggybacking children and playing chasies and things like that.

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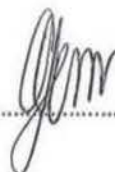
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6. In 1974 I typed out the weekly church Bulletin on a voluntary basis either after school or on a Saturday morning whenever I had time. Sometimes I would type the Bulletin at home and other times I would use a room downstairs at the presbytery. I remember on one particular occasion I was typing and printing the Bulletin at the presbytery and had my two sons with me. Whilst I was working they were playing in the school, running through the corridors and around the school grounds. After I had finished my work I took the boys home and went about my normal routine with dinner and looking after my family.
7. Later that night when I was putting my younger son to bed. I remember nursing him in our living room and talking to him. He was around 6 years old. At this time as we were talking he said 'Fr RYAN touched me on my dickie bird' or words to that effect. I felt shocked and probably felt disbelief and I asked him to repeat what he said. He repeated the statement and said it had happened when he and his older brother (our other son) were playing. I questioned him about what he was saying, asking him where he and his brother were at the time and things like that. I cannot recall exactly what he said but I recall he said it happened when they were playing at the school whilst I was doing the Bulletin.
8. I went immediately into the other bedroom where our older son was in bed. I sat on the bed and spoke to him. I said 'what happened while I was doing the Bulletin?' He looked embarrassed and sort of smiled, and he didn't say much. He was the more reserved of the two boys and he made a coy admission that Fr RYAN had touched him as well or words to that effect.

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9. I do not recall the time of the year that this happened but it was not cold as I recall my younger son was only wearing light pyjamas when I was talking to him and the heater was not on. My husband was away from home for work when this occurred.

Advice sought from police prosecutor

10. That night I called my mother, told her what my sons had said and sought her advice about what to do. My mother also attended St Joseph's church. She suggested that I speak with a police prosecutor (John SCROGINGS) who went to St Joseph's church and who also had children attending St Joseph's school. I knew the police prosecutor and his family from the parish and would have considered him to be an acquaintance rather than a close friend.

11. I recall visiting the police prosecutor at his residence on my own within a week. It was prior to my husband returning from being away for work. I went to see him to seek his advice as I didn't know what to do, not to make a complaint to him as a police officer. The police prosecutor's wife answered the door but was not present during my conversation with him. I told the police prosecutor what my sons had said to me. He explained that I could make a formal complaint to the police and explained to me how to press charges and that my sons would be required to appear in court. I recall that he said they would be asked questions about what had occurred. He said it would be their word against the word of a priest or words to that effect. I recall him using the term 'a man of the cloth' to describe Fr RYAN. I was against the idea of my young sons having to give evidence in a witness box at court and did not seek details of where to go to make a complaint to the police. The police prosecutor suggested I speak to Fr COTTER. I occasionally saw the police

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prosecutor after this meeting, usually at St Joseph's church, but I do not remember speaking to him again about this matter.

12. I believe I would have thought more about going to the police if what my sons had disclosed had been a much more serious matter.

Complaint to Fr COTTER and Fr RYAN

13. About a week later my husband returned from working away from home. I told him what had happened and the advice I had been given. He then went with me to the presbytery at St Joseph's church and took the two boys who we left in the car. I don't recall contacting the presbytery prior to going there but I would have called the housekeeper and made an appointment to see Fr COTTER.

14. I recall we walked in the front door of the presbytery and met with Fr COTTER in a room on the left. I cannot remember the exact conversation but I did most of the talking and my husband remained calm. I said 'I've got a complaint against Fr RYAN. My two boys have said that he has touched them on their private parts' or words to that effect. I recall using the word 'complaint' as that was the word used by the police prosecutor when I spoke to him.

15. I can remember looking at Fr COTTER and seeing the colour sort of drain from his face. He had a look of anguish and shock on his face. He sat there and didn't say anything for a short time. Then he said 'I thought something like this ...' or words to that effect. I recall he stopped speaking in the middle of a sentence and didn't say anything else to us.

16. Father COTTER immediately summonsed Fr RYAN to come down into the room. I can't remember how he summonsed him, whether he rang him or paged him or even went up

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to get him but Fr RYAN came into the room a short time later. Father COTTER remained in the room with Fr RYAN, my husband and I. Father COTTER said to Fr RYAN 'Mrs CNA has made a complaint against you' or words to that effect. I said 'my two boys have said that you touched them on their private parts'. I said something else but I cannot remember what I said. I was expecting an apology or something and was surprised by Fr RYAN's response. Father Ryan said 'no nothing like that happened' or words to that effect, so I offered to bring the boys in to put the allegation to him. Both Fr COTTER and Fr RYAN said that would not be necessary.

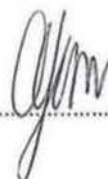
17. I was at a bit of a loss with their reaction. I knew in myself that I couldn't put my boys through court and didn't think much else could be done. I was surprised at Fr RYAN's reaction. Father COTTER's reaction was one of shock but it was my impression based on his body language and his calling Fr RYAN into his office, that he believed me. He was sort of dismayed. I thought to myself what can I do, it is the word of two little boys against that of a Catholic priest. Catholic priests in 1974 were held in the highest esteem and were trusted by the community and their congregation. I didn't know what to do or where to turn to after my meeting with Fr COTTER and Fr RYAN.

18. Within the next week, Fr RYAN approached me whilst I was shopping at Coles supermarket at The Junction. I recall that I was on my own near the freezer section not far from the checkouts when he came up beside me. He whispered 'They're just words'. I remember I felt very scared. I replied 'What do you mean?' He then said 'What you said, they're just words'. I remember going straight home and thinking to myself "they're just words, so is the Catholic Church, so is the Parish Priest, they're just words"

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- 19. I do not recall seeing Fr RYAN around St Joseph's school after that. I recall my mother told me that Fr RYAN had gone to Melbourne but do not remember when she told me this. My children completed their primary education at St Joseph's school. I did not hear of any other complaints about Fr RYAN during this time. I continued to attend St Joseph's church for the sake of my mother until she passed away many years later.
- 20. In late 1996 and/or early 1997 I was contacted by the police who were investigating Fr RYAN at the time and signed a police statement on 14 January 1997 detailing my sons' disclosures, meeting with the police prosecutor and our complaint to Fr COTTER and Fr RYAN. I was not asked to appear in court.
- 21. My eldest son has told me since my original statement in 1997 that Fr RYAN was thrashing REDACTED in the sacristy and he REDACTED laughed, he did not know why he laughed.
- 22. My eldest son also told me that on another occasion in the sacristy "Fr RYAN asked to undo my sash". He also told me that at that time he could see my mother and I in the front row of the Church.

CNA

Signed:

Date: 25/8/16.

Witness: *[Signature]*

Date: 25/8/16

Signature: Witness: